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Director of Central Intelligence

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USSR-ARGENTINA: Closer Relations

There has been a noticeable covergence of interests in recent months between Argentina and the Soviet Union, and this trend seems certain to continue, regardless of US policies. 3.5(c)

Moscow's interest in Argentina quickened following the US grain embargo. In addition to securing access to Argentine grain and developing trade ties, the USSR is trying to exploit Argentine differences with the US. 3.5(c)

Moscow is willing to overlook Argentina's right-wing orientation; a better relationship with Buenos Aires would give the Soviets a foothold in an important country in a traditional US sphere of influence. 3.5(c)

The relationship with the Soviets allows Argentina to demonstrate both its increasing independence of the US and its growing international stature. It also provides Buenos Aires an opportunity to display its irritation over US human rights and nuclear proliferation policies and the termination of Washington's military assistance program. 3.5(c)

Expanded relations probably will be limited largely to trade. Soviet grain purchases in 1980 are likely to total about 6 million tons--more than triple the 1979 amount. The two countries reportedly have negotiated a long-term grain agreement for a minimum of 5 million tons of grain annually for the 1981-85 period, thus further tipping the trade balance--already $350 million in Argentina's favor. 3.5(c)

To redress this imbalance, the Soviets will try to sell more to Argentina. They are not likely to have much success, however, and probably would be willing to endure an adverse trade balance in order to preserve access to sizable supplies of grain and meat. 3.5(c)

In the nuclear area, the Soviets reportedly have indicated their willingness to supply enriched uranium should present negotiations with the US on Argentine nuclear needs prove unsuccessful. The Argentines also are interested in Soviet heavy water for their natural uranium reactors. 3.5(c)

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